



Flashback – Angela Smith gets a kiss from Gordon Brown earlier this year

Angela: I will not give up fighting for my home town

SHE has been Basildon's political sweetheart for the past 13 years.

But when the voters of South Basildon and East Thurrock cast their votes on Thursday, they ended the dream for the former Labour MP Angela Smith.

However, still cutting a glamorous figure even in defeat, Mrs Smith remained defiant to the end vowing the loss of her seat to Tory candidate Stephen Metcalfe was only a "short-term" loan.

After hinting in her losing speech a return to politics may be on the cards in the future, the departing Labour MP said this year's hard-fought election campaign had left her little time to ponder her future.

She said: "I haven't been thinking about what would happen if I lose."

"If I had been worrying about what I might be doing next then I wouldn't have been doing my job properly."

Mrs Smith, who lives in Langdon Hills, said she would stay in the town where she has spent the majority of her life,

By GINA MARDEN
gina.marden@nqe.com

supporting fellow Labour colleagues in ongoing campaigns, such as their opposition to plans to develop on Basildon Golf Course.

She also plans to continue to help former workers of the Visteon car plant in their battle to receive the pensions they paid for.

Mrs Smith explained: "I'm not just going to walk away from those things, I still live here. There is still work to be done."

Mrs Smith, 51, will now devote more time to friends and family.

She added: "I've been working 70 to 80-hour weeks and that means I've not always been that great to my friends and family."

"I've missed out on a lot of things because of my work commitments, but I've always had their support regardless."

Mrs Smith won the seat, formerly known as Basildon and East Thurrock, in the 1997 general election, replacing David Amess when he moved to

Southend West. Her Basildon upbringing and warm nature meant Mrs Smith secured a place in the hearts of Basildon voters.

She was appointed Government Whip in 1999, before being promoted to Northern Ireland minister in October 2002.

In 2006 she was moved to the Department for Communities and Local Government with responsibility for the fire service, before, in June 2007, she was appointed Parliamentary Private Secretary to the new Prime Minister Gordon Brown.

Mrs Smith – married to Basildon Council's former Labour group leader Nigel Smith – said working with Mr Brown was one of the highlights of her career.

Choking back tears, there was no doubt for Mrs Smith the biggest high of her career had been representing the people of the town where she grew up.

Mrs Smith reflected: "Being the MP for my home town has been a real honour."

"I'm very proud to have served the people of Basildon and East Thurrock."

I'll make sure travellers are made to leave the green belt

Basildon & Billericay

J Baron (C) 21,922
A Davies (Lab) 9,584
M Hibbs (Lib Dem) 6,538
I Bateman (BNP) 1,934
A Broad (Ukip) 1,591

Maj: 12,338
C hold
Perc poll: 63.7

By ADAM GAUDRY
adam.gaudry@nqe.com

TORY MP John Baron has pledged to see through the removal of travellers living on illegal sites.

The new Basildon and Billericay MP said the Tories would make sure the issue of travellers living illegally on green belt land was resolved during the next few years.

Mr Baron has previously campaigned to remove hundreds of travellers, living on illegal sites at Hovefields, Wickford, and Dale Farm, Crays Hill, and restore the green belt land to its natural state.

Speaking after winning the Basildon and Billericay election, Mr Baron said: "We will see the traveller situation though because we're right to protect the green belt."

"We need to localise planning decisions."

"I'm also fed up with outside interference and it will be a Tory principle to localise planning issues."

A former commander turned Tory politician

FORMER soldier John Baron is entering his second decade in politics.

A former platoon commander in the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers, Mr Baron has been interested in politics since he was much younger, studying law, history and politics at Cambridge University.

Mr Baron became involved in politics in 1990, joining the Chelmsford Conservative group.

His first time as parliamentary candidate came in Basildon in 1997, but was beaten by a margin of



Re-elected – MP John Baron

The new constituency of Basildon and Billericay now takes in Basildon town centre, Wickford and Pitsea have moved out into the new South Basildon seat. However, Mr Baron said this would make little difference to his focus as an MP.

He said: "Issues important to the centre of Basildon are important to the people of Wickford and Pitsea."

"The rate of crime and antisocial behaviour, and planning decisions are two of the key issues."

Mr Baron also said he would be putting politics aside to try to expand his annual charity fun walk at Barleylands Farm, in Billericay, which was deliberately postponed until July 18 because of the election.

13,000 votes by the recently ousted Angela Smith.

Four years later he was elected to the Billericay seat in 2001, winning the constituency with a majority of 5,000 votes.

Proving popular with the voters, Mr Baron expanded his majority by more than double four years later, hold the seat with an 11,000 majority in 2005.

He has now been victorious in the new Basildon and Billericay seat, brought about by boundary changes.